

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Annie Glover and I am here on behalf of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Tribes' Natural Resources Department.

The Tribes respectfully oppose HB 159 given the negative implications for State-Tribal Hunting and Fishing Agreements.

After many years spent in court litigating shared fish and game management concerns, the tribes and Fish Wildlife and Parks, on behalf of the State of Montana, have developed working agreements that allow for the co-management of state-tribal fish and game resources.

If HB 159 is passed, it will likely restrict the FWP Commission's ability to approve joint bird hunting regulations, as early as this fall. Tribal regulations require non-toxic shot for bird hunting. Lead is a known toxic substance for both wildlife and humans. That is why the Tribes went non-toxic for bird shot over twenty years ago.

This bill would not allow the FWP Commission to approve joint regulations that include this non-toxic shot requirement. Without that approval, we will be unable to reach consensus on legal ammunition, which jeopardizes our State-Tribal Hunting and Fishing agreement. This could potentially reopen the original litigation between the tribes and the state of Montana.

The tribes are committed to working with the state in conserving and managing fish and game resources that preserve tribal heritage and culture. Tribal peoples have long pursued fish and game management practices that sustain these natural resources for generations to come. Maintaining a good relationship, where both the tribes and the state can live up to and fulfill negotiated management agreements, is essential to our ability to sustain those natural resources. It is the tribe's preference, and likely the state's, to keep these issues out of the confrontational realm of litigation, and maintain our negotiations process and State-Tribal Hunting and Fishing Agreements.